

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release Tuesday, July 28, 1970

INTERIOR SUBMITS NEW RULES TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SPECIES

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel today moved to put more muscle into rules and regulations governing the Endangered Species Act of 1969, saying, "if any species of wildlife is threatened, we are empowered to take action to protect it--and we will, by closing our markets to the importation of products from such species."

The Act calls for a ban on imports of wildlife or products derived from wildlife, in danger of extinction.

Secretary Hickel ordered new proposed regulations--relating to the listing of various species of wildlife threatened with extinction--to be published in the Federal Register for public review and comment.

The Secretary noted that the sperm whale--the subject of some dissent from commercial importers concerned about its endangerment--is included tentatively, along with the baleen whale and approximately 100 other species of various classifications which have not been cited previously for public review.

Rules published on June 2 in the Federal Register included the sperm whale, although the original proposed list of endangered species, published on April 14, did not.

The Endangered Species Act provides that the Secretary of the Interior shall make final determinations, based on "the best scientific and commercial data available to him" and after consultation with the Secretary of State, the foreign country or countries in which such species are found, and interested government agencies and private organizations and individuals.

"Our intent in administering this very important piece of legislation is to preserve the remaining species of wildlife on our planet from further predations by commercial hunters and fishermen who have disregarded the potential damage to human as well as creature life by wanton harvesting from seas and forests," Secretary Hickel said.

He added, "I became particularly concerned about the manner in which the whale is being threatened around the planet, in talks which began two years ago with General Charles Lindbergh, an outstanding conservationist and a man who has devoted a great deal of research to factors endangering the whale."

At the same time Secretary Hickel stressed that "if there are any serious questions in the minds of the scientific community or other reliable sources of information, then we will investigate further before imposing legal restraints."

"Rights will be respected insofar as they do not intrude on the ecological balance of the world community."

"In the case of the sperm whale," the Secretary said, "this creature has become a subject of contention with respect to application of the Endangered Species Act. Consequently, I am taking the necessary measures to remove all reasonable doubts, and other species, in addition to the sperm whale, are also subject to review."

x x x